



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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Implementation of South Atlantic Rock Shrimp Amendment 5, Including the Limited Access Endorsement Program

The final rule to implement Amendment 5 to the FMP for the shrimp fishery off the southern Atlantic states (North Carolina through the east coast of Florida) was published in the Federal Register on January 16, 2003. There are a number of deadlines associated with the rule relative to obtaining proper permits and installing an approved vessel monitoring system (VMS) device for the South Atlantic rock shrimp fishery. This Bulletin provides additional details for South Atlantic rock shrimp fishery participants. These South Atlantic programmatic requirements do not apply to other vessels shrimping in the Gulf of Mexico, and not fishing in or possessing shrimp in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Gear Requirements

The first important deadline is that beginning February 18, 2003, all vessels fishing for rock shrimp in the South Atlantic region must use, in the limited access area (Georgia-Florida east coast), a minimum mesh size of 1 7/8 inches for the cod end of a rock shrimp trawl. The use of smaller-mesh bag liners is prohibited.

Limited Access Rock Shrimp Endorsement

Effective July 15, 2003, a limited access rock shrimp endorsement will be required onboard a vessel to fish for or possess rock shrimp in the South Atlantic EEZ off Georgia or off Florida. Open access rock shrimp permits are still required in the South Atlantic EEZ off North and South Carolina.

Initially, NOAA Fisheries will issue limited access endorsements to owners of vessels that had valid Federal permits for South Atlantic rock shrimp on or before December 31, 2000, and that had landings of rock shrimp from the South Atlantic of at least 15,000 pounds during any one of the calendar years 1996 through 2000. Vessels that had Federal permits for South Atlantic rock shrimp will be determined solely from NOAA Fisheries' records. Claimed landings will be verified from landings data in state or Federal data bases provided the landings were submitted on or before January 31, 2001.

For initial eligibility purposes, the owner of a vessel that had a permit for South Atlantic rock shrimp during the qualifying period would retain the rock shrimp landings record of that vessel during the time of his/her ownership. Exception to this policy would occur only if **prior to the publication of the final rule (January 16, 2003)** the sale of a vessel included a written agreement stating that credit for those qualifying landings was transferred to a new owner.

The Permits Branch will notify each owner of a vessel that had a South Atlantic rock shrimp permit on or before December 31, 2000, and each owner of a currently permitted vessel of its initial determination of eligibility beginning March 2003. Any vessel owner, who does obtain notification, should contact the NOAA Fisheries' Permits Branch (Permits Branch) at 727-570-5326.

Applications for endorsements must be postmarked or hand-delivered to the Permits Branch no later than the May 16, 2003, deadline. You must submit an application, even if it is incomplete, to the Permits Branch by this deadline, so that you can appeal any initial ineligibility determination. It is essential that you maintain good records for use in the event you wish to submit an appeal.

An Application Oversight Board will be established to review all appeals. The Board will forward its recommendations to the Regional Administrator for his final decision.

If you have any further questions concerning what and when you need to apply for limited access, please contact the SERO Permits Branch at 727-570-5326, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am through 4:30 pm.

Operator Permit Cards

Effective May 16, 2003, operator permit cards issued by NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Region will be required for any person operating a vessel fishing for rock shrimp in the South Atlantic EEZ or to possess rock shrimp in or

from the South Atlantic EEZ, or to be an operator of a vessel that has a valid permit for South Atlantic rock shrimp. In addition to the operator permit, the individual must carry one other form of identification, such as a driver's license. All vessels fishing for rock shrimp in the South Atlantic after May 15, 2003, will be required to have such licensed operator on board. During February 2003, NOAA Fisheries' Permits Branch will begin mailing applications for operator permit cards to owners of currently permitted rock shrimp vessels. If you do not receive such an application by mid-March 2003, please contact the Permits Branch 727-570-5326 at that time. Operator permit card applications are also available upon request from the Permits Branch.

Information required on the operator permit card application includes the applicant's name, address, and other identifying information, such as date of birth, height, weight, and hair and eye color. Also, an applicant is required to provide two recent (no more than 1 year old) color, passport-sized photographs. An administrative fee of \$50 will be charged and the permit will be valid for a period of three years beginning with the birth month of the applicant.

Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)

For each vessel that has been issued a limited access endorsement for South Atlantic rock shrimp, Amendment 5 requires such vessel to use a NOAA Fisheries approved VMS when fishing in the South Atlantic. An operating VMS includes an operating mobile transmitting unit on the vessel and a functioning communication link between the unit and NOAA Fisheries as provided by a NOAA Fisheries-approved communication service provider.

NOAA Fisheries will publish a list of approved units as soon as possible. A vessel that has been issued a limited access endorsement for the South Atlantic rock shrimp fishery will be required to have an operating VMS beginning October 14, 2003, or later, if required to provide permit holders 90 days from publication of the list of approved VMS devices and providers to purchase, activate and install the equipment.

Reminder of Key Implementation Dates

March 2003 - Determination and notification of initial eligibility.

May 16, 2003 - Operator permit cards are required to be an operator of a vessel fishing for or possessing rock shrimp from the South Atlantic EEZ.

May 16, 2003 - Applications for rock shrimp limited access endorsements must be postmarked or hand-delivered to the SERO permit office.

July 15, 2003 - Limited Access Rock Shrimp Endorsement required to possess or land rock shrimp from the South Atlantic EEZ off Georgia or off Florida.

October 14, 2003 (or 90 days after NMFS publishes a list of approved transmitting units and associated communications service providers, whichever is later) - Operational vessel monitoring systems are required.

This and other news releases are available on the SERO homepage at <http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov>. To obtain considerable recorded information about our missions, services, and management measures, call our toll free public service line at 1-866-570-5301. If the information you need is not available on that line, you can leave us a message and we'll get back to you within one business day. NOAA Fisheries is an agency of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.